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Superintendent of Schools

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March 9, 2010

The Honorable State Senator John Pappageorge
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator Pappageorge:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer input into Senate Bill 1074. I am sorry a representative of the Troy School District could not personally appear at the hearing as we have a Board of Education meeting this evening that requires our attendance.

The Troy School District contracted its food service, transportation, grounds, and custodial services for the 2009-2010 school year. The changes were part of our ongoing commitment to explore every possible avenue to reduce costs and maintain services for our students and parents. The decision by our Board of Education to privatize services allowed the District to realize \$3.1 million in annual savings that could be redirected to support our classroom programs. As you would expect, there have been transition issues, but the service providers have been responsive to our needs and have worked to maintain the exemplary services expected by our community.

The privatization of services can be a very emotional and difficult issue. However, our parents and residents certainly understand that the Board of Education needs to make fiscally responsible decisions that protect the financial future of our schools. Our TSD employees who were impacted by this decision were given every opportunity to apply for the positions being offered through this transition. In addition, our Board of Education adjusted our contracts to ensure employees maintained their existing wages or rates that were higher than offered new employees through our service providers. The Board also made changes to ensure our former employees received greater health care coverage than packages offered through the service providers. Finally, we offered impacted TSD employees job placement and career training services through the Troy Career Center.

We understand that state lawmakers are working hard to make education a priority in funding decisions. I cannot emphasize enough the funding crisis facing our local schools as we seek to maintain exemplary services for our students. We urge you and your colleagues to continue to work to protect funding for education and make the necessary reforms that help control costs for our communities.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 248-823-4003.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Fowler".

Barbara Fowler, Ph.D.
Superintendent